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Is embedding entailed in consumer valuation of food safety characteristics?

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Embedding between food safety characteristics is assumed to exist if inclusion of an additional food safety attribute does not change the total value of food safety. In the current paper, we investigate consumers' preferences for food safety characteristics with a particular focus on testing for such an embedding effect. We conduct two choice experiment surveys; one case study regarding safety of minced pork and another regarding safety of chicken breasts. The safety characteristics of minced pork were described in terms of the risk of Salmonella infection and restrictions in use of antibiotics in the pork production. In the chicken breast case, safety characteristics were described in terms of the risk of Salmonella and Campylobacter infection. Respondents were sampled from an online internet panel of Danish consumers, and the obtained samples consist of 2600 and 753 respondents, respectively. Our results showed no indications of embedding effects between the chosen safety characteristics. That is, we found no embedding between consumer valuation of Salmonella risk and the use of antibiotics in minced pork or between their valuations of Campylobacter and Salmonella risks in chicken breast.

Keywords: choice experiment, bias, embedding, market goods, food safety.